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## *House of Representatives*

**Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis**

**Honoring Asian Pacific American Heritage Month**

**May 20, 2003**

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and to pay tribute to the 120,000 individuals of Asian descent that live in my congressional district. I am fortunate to represent an ethnically diverse district that has experienced first hand the economic and cultural contributions of the Asian Pacific American community. Although less than 4 percent of the U.S. population is Asian, I am proud that 19 percent of my congressional district is of Asian descent. Some cities in my congressional district have a well-established Asian Pacific American community. Monterey Park, for example, is home to a Chinese and Chinese-American community. Monterey Park is 60 percent Chinese and its City Council is majority Asian as well. Other cities in my congressional district, like West Covina, have experienced an increase in its Asian population in more recent times. From 1980 to the present, West Covina's Asian Pacific American population has grown from 4 percent to 23 percent. In addition to this recent growth, the Japanese community in West Covina has long been an important part of the city. On June 3, the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center, located in West Covina, will celebrate its 52nd Anniversary. The East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center provides important services like Japanese language classes from the kindergarten to the high school level, martial art and cultural classes like Japanese classical dance; and a year round program for its Japanese American senior and retired citizens. The East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center has significantly contributed to the strength of West Covina and the greater San Gabriel Valley.

Asian Pacific Americans bring richness not only to our culture, but also to our economy and to our advancement as a nation. Asian Pacific Americans have made vast contributions in the fields of medicine, technology, and agriculture that benefit all Americans. Throughout times of heightened national security, Asian Pacific Americans have fought to protect democracy in every war since the Civil War. For example, despite the disturbing racism towards Japanese Americans during World War II, Japanese Americans volunteered to serve in the armed forces as part of the 442nd Infantry Regimental Combat Team. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team remains the most decorated unit in U.S. military history. Not only did these Japanese servicemen show their loyalty to the United States, but they also earned more than 18,000 individual decorations in less than two years. These noble men deserve our recognition.

In closing, I would like to honor the memory of a truly remarkable woman, the late Congresswoman Patsy Mink. In my 2 years working with Patsy, I quickly came to admire her spirit and determination. Patsy was a true warrior, a champion for the causes of equality, civil rights and environmental justice--causes important to the Asian Pacific American community and all communities. As the first Asian-American woman in Congress, Patsy Mink was a hero to many. Patsy may not be with us in body any longer, but her spirit continues to thrive as we celebrate May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.